

Pei

An in-class punctuation exercise. The following passage from a Lewis Thomas essay has been stripped of all punctuation and capitalization; the student's job is to put it in. This becomes complicated (on purpose) after a while. I typically have students work on this individually, then when they're done, I put in the changes as they dictate to me. When I disagree with them, or they disagree with each other (it always happens), that's cause for discussion.

PUNCTUATE ME!

we learn as we say by trial and error why do we always say that why not trial and rightness or trial and triumph the old phrase puts it that way because that is in real life the way it is done

a good laboratory like a good bank or a corporation or government has to run like a computer almost everything is done flawlessly by the book and all the numbers add up to the predicted sums the days go by and then if it is a lucky day and a lucky laboratory somebody makes a mistake the wrong buffer something in one of the blanks a decimal misplaced in reading counts the warm room off by a degree and a half a mouse out of his box or just a misreading of the days protocol whatever when the results come in something is obviously screwed up and then the action can begin

the misreading is not the important error it opens the way the next step is the crucial one if the investigator can bring himself to say but even so look at that then the new finding whatever it is is ready for snatching what is needed for progress to be made is the move based on the error

lewis thomas

to err is human

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